



**Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.**

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**Testimony  
Submitted to the  
Education Committee**

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**SB 438 AN ACT CONCERNING CHARTER SCHOOLS AND OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM FUNDING  
SB 440 AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE  
SB 442 AN ACT CONCERNING BOARDS OF EDUCATION  
HB 5487 AN ACT CONCERNING THE OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM  
HB 5489 AN ACT CONCERNING SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM  
HB 5491 AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT REFORMS TO REDUCE THE  
ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN CONNECTICUT  
HB 5493 AN ACT CONCERNING STRATEGIC PLANNING IN STATE EDUCATION POLICY AND  
CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING**

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) strongly supports the provisions of SB 438, An Act Concerning Charter Schools and Open Choice Program Funding, which would increase the per pupil grant to districts receiving a significant number of open choice students. These resources are critical to supporting the costs of providing an appropriate educational experience. In these times of extremely difficult local budget constraints, it is appropriate for the state to support the long standing integration program that is a key component of the Sheff settlement agreement.

We are concerned about the provisions in this bill which remove the "within available appropriations" limitation on the number of charter schools and their enrollment at a time when districts face caps on many of the state reimbursement grants, putting them in a precarious fiscal situation. It is inequitable to allow unrestricted growth in the charter school grants.

CABE has significant concerns about the implementation of SB 440, An Act Concerning School Districts and Teacher Performance. It is unclear from the proposed bill how the determination of effective or highly effective teachers or principals would be made, and how "acceptable rates of student growth" and "high rates of student growth" would be determined. It is also unclear of what the purpose of the department making such information available would be, as there is no tie to teacher and principal evaluation or compensation.

The language in SB 442, An Act Concerning Boards of Education, needs further clarification and definition to ensure that the reconstitution of a board of education in a district identified as in need of improvement would only occur after other measures have been taken to provide support and professional development to that board of education. It is also important to include a process for return to a board elected by the community.

CABE supports HB 5487, An Act Concerning the Open Choice Program, which increases the grant from \$2,500 to \$3,000 for each out of district student participating in the Open Choice Program for the reasons indicated in our support of SB 438.

HB 5489, An Act Concerning Secondary School Reform incorporates the recommendations of the secondary school reform task force, which we support. This bill appropriately acknowledges the necessity of funding in order to successfully implement this significant increase in high school graduation requirements. We are concerned that as written the bill would put these requirements in place for classes graduating in 2019 regardless of whether there are resources available at the time. In addition to the resources needed for the State Department of Education to develop the appropriate curriculum, it is critical that resources be in place to provide the student support systems. Without such student support systems, which were identified as a critical component of these changes by the task force, it will not be possible for all students to successfully meet these requirements. We urge you to take this into consideration when you debate this bill.

CABE supports several of the provisions in HB 5491, An Act Concerning Certain School District Reforms to Reduce the Achievement Gap in Connecticut, and has concerns about others. CABE supports the provisions in Section 3 which provide for the use of data and indicators of student academic growth as a significant factor in evaluating teacher performance. With respect to Section 4, it is important that the proposed Performance Evaluation Advisory Council specifically include principals, superintendents and board of education members.

CABE is concerned that some of the provisions in this bill will not support the goal of reducing the achievement gap. Section 1 of the bill requires that upon receipt of a petition from 51% of the parents a board of education hold a public hearing and "immediately after such public hearing" hold a public meeting to vote concerning implementation of the recommendations. Boards of education actively seek to increase parent involvement in the education of their own children as well as the overall direction of the school district. Parents and other community members already have the opportunity to express their views at each public meeting of a board of education, during budget hearings, and at the school or classroom level. The process laid out in this section could have a destabilizing impact on the efforts of a school district to implement educational reform throughout the district. In addition, the time lines required in this section allow no opportunity for thoughtful deliberation, by requiring an immediate decision to implement significant structural changes.

The requirement in Section 7 that beginning July 1, 2010 each district must conduct two parent teacher conferences, would require many districts to reopen collective bargaining agreements and likely result in additional compensation.

Section 10 is overly restrictive in requiring all boards of education to provide an advanced placement course program. Some school districts use the International Baccalaureate program to provide advanced level courses, and this should remain an option. It is also unclear why it would be necessary for the State Board of Education to approve advanced placement course programs offered by each board of education.

CABE urges you to reject HB 5493, An Act Concerning Strategic Planning in State Education Policy and Charter School Funding, which would place the funding responsibility for charter schools on school districts. This proposal would have a detrimental impact on the programs and services offered to those students who make the choice to remain in their traditional school. The original intent of charter schools was to create better educational programs for all children, not to divide limited public resources. Costs, unfortunately, are not reduced when a small number of students choose to attend a charter school. This proposal would add another unfunded mandate, at a time when school districts are facing extreme financial burdens and are unable to raise additional funds through local property taxes.

In addition, CABE urges you to develop a funding formula that addresses Open Choice, magnet schools, and charter schools, whether or not Sheff related or interdistrict, local or state funded as part of a single comprehensive program. It is the lack of a comprehensive funding formula that creates uncertainty about the future of these schools and programs.